

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 BANGKO 05234 301459Z

43

ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00

NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03 SS-20 USIA-15 DRC-01

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P R 300645Z MAR 74

FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1993

INFO AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

AMEMBASSY RANGOON

AMEMBASSY SAIGON

AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

CINCPAC

13TH ADVON UDORN

DIA

USSAG NAKHON PHANOM

AMCONSUL CHIANG MAI

AMCONSUL UDORN

AMCONSUL SONGKHLA

S E C R E T BANGKOK 5234

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PVOG, TH

SUBJECT: EMERGING LIKELIHOOD OF A NEW CABINET BY APRIL 15

REFS: A) BANGKOK 5022 (NOTAL)

B) FBIS BANGKOK D300245Z MAR 74

SUMMARY: REF B CONTAINS AN EXCLUSIVE SCOOP CUM PREDICTION BY BANGKOK POST EDITOR-IN-CHIEF THEH CHONGKHADIKIJ TO THE EFFECT THAT BY APRIL 15 A CABINET RESHUFFLE WILL TAKE PLACE. ACCORDING TO THEH, SANYA WILL AGAIN BE PM, AND THERE WILL BE A "BRAIN TRUST" TO HELP THE CABINET AND THE COUNTRY COPE WITH ITS VARIED PROBLEMS. THEH'S ARTICLE HAS THE RING OF TRUTH AND HIS INFORMATION ALMOST SURELY COMES FROM INIMPEACHABLE TOP RTG SOURCES. AN RTG SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 02 BANGKO 05234 301459Z

SPOKESMAN CONFIRMED TO THE DCM THE LIKELIHOOD OF WHAT

THEH REPORTS, BUT DID SO BEFORE THE ARTICLE APPEARED.
THE ARTICLE FOLLOWS A PERIOD OF INTENSE PUBLIC CRITICISM OF THE
SANYA GOVERNMENT'S APPARENT INABILITY EITHER TO COPE
WITH MANY OF THAILAND'S CURRENT ECONOMIC PROBLEMS OR TO CONVINCE
THE THAI PUBLIC THAT THAILAND'S PROBLEMS ARE INEXTRICABLY
LINKED TO WORLD-WIDE INFLATION FOR WHICH NO GOVERNMENT CAN
REALISTICALLY OFFER ANY SURE AND CERTAINLY NO SHORT-TERM,
HOPE OF RESPITE. WE EXPECT ANY CHANGE TO OCCUR WITHOUT UNTOWARD
INCIDENT. END SUMMARY.

1. THEH'S FRONT PAGE BANGKOK POST ARTICLE PREDICTING
THAT BY APRIL 15 A NEW CABINET WILL EMERGE, AND THAT
SANYA IS MOST LIKELY "TO BE REAPPOINTED", ADDS SIGNIFICANTLY
TO THE GATHERING INDICATORS THAT THE GOVERNMENT WILL UNDERGO
A CABINET RESHUFFLE ON OR ABOUT ITS SIX-MONTH BIRTHDAY.
WHILE WE HAVE NO CONFIRMATION OF THE DETAILS OF THE PIECE,
PARTICULARLY THE NAMES OF THE BRAIN TRUSTERS TO ADVISE
THE CABINET, WE BELIEVE THAT ITS BASIC THRUST MAKES SENSE.
AN RTG SPOKESMAN TOLD THE DCM BEFORE THEH'S PIECE
APPEARED THAT A CABINET CHANGE WOULD PROBABLY OCCUR
IN MID-APRIL, AND THAT SANYA WOULD REMAIN.

2. WE HAVE KNOWN EVER SINCE OCTOBER 15 THAT SANYA
AND MANY OF HIS KEY CABINET MEMBERS AGREED TO SERVE
FOR SIX MONTHS, SHORTLY AFTER WHICH TIME THEY OVER-CON-
FIDENTLY EXPECTED TO BOW OUT TO AN ELECTED SUCCESSOR.
THE SEVERE BUFFETING THAT THEY HAVE ENDURED OVER STRIKES,
STUDENT UNREST, INFLATION, OIL AND ACCUSATIONS OF
INEFFECTIVENESS IN THE INTERVENING FIVE AND A HALF
MONTHS CAN ONLY HAVE REINFORCED THEIR ORIGIN PROCLIVI-
TIES. WE HAVE LITTLE DOUBT THAT SANYA TOO WOULD LIKE TO BE
OUT FROM UNDER THE GUN OF CRITICISM AND NATIONAL
DISSATISFACTION WITH A JOB HARDLY ANYBODY IN THAILAND COULD
HAVE DONE BETTER UNDER THE CIRCUMSTANCES.

3. FOR THE PAST SEVERAL WEEKS WE HAVE OBSERVED AND
REPORTED GATHERING INDICATORS THAT THE KING AND THE MILITARY
LEADERSHIP WERE WORRIED ABOUT THE DRIFT OF EVENTS. IN JUST
THE LAST FEW DAYS, PUBLIC AND EDITORIAL CRITICISM, PAR-
TICULARLY OF CABINET MINISTERS CHARGED WITH SOME OF THE
SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 03 BANGKO 05234 301459Z

ECONOMIC PROBLEM AREAS, HAS BEGUN TO INCREASE TO THE POINT
WHERE UNDER THAI TRADITIONS OF "FACE" SANYA WOULD BE OBLIGED
TO OFFER TO STEP DOWN IF HIS CONSTITUENCY THOUGHT SOMEONE
ELSE COULD DO BETTER.

4. THE PRIME MINISTER'S EXPRESSED WILLINGNESS TO STEP
DOWN HAS CAUSED SOME TO CALL HIM FAINT HEARTED. DURING
HIS JANUARY VISIT TO THE KING IN CHIANG MAI, THE KING

IS WIDELY REPORTED TO HAVE GIVEN SANYA A VIGOROUS PEP TALK, AND SANYA'S RESULTING SPRINGIER STEP AND MORE ASSERTIVE MANNER WERE READILY APPARENT, AT LEAST FOR AWHILE. HOWEVER, THE FACT REMAINS THAT SANYA FINDS THAT THE PRIME MINISTER'S JOB REQUIRES TALENTS AND A DRIVE HE FINDS IT AGAINST HIS GRAIN TO SUMMON.

5. MOST SOURCES NEVERTHELESS AGREE WITH THEH THAT SANYA WILL REMAIN PRIME MINISTER, IF AND WHEN A CABINET RESHUFFLE TAKES PLACE. THE KING'S CONTINUING FAITH IN SANYA AS AN HONORABLE INDIVIDUAL, AND THE ABSENCE OF ANY OTHER CIVILIAN WHO COULD DRAW TAUT THE REINS OF GOVERNMENT IN THE TIME REMAINING BEFORE NATIONAL ELECTIONS, MAKE SANYA'S REAPPOINTMENT FAIRLY CERTAIN.

6. WE DO NOT ANTICIPATE THAT THE CABINET CHANGE, IF AND WHEN IT TAKES PLACE, WILL OCCASION DANGEROUS UNREST IN THE KINGDOM. AS A PRECAUTIONARY MOVE ONLY, THE MILITARY WENT ON FULL ALERT ON 29 MARCH TO PRECLUDE THE SITUATION'S GETTING OUT OF HAND AT ANY POINT, AND WILL LIKELY STAY IN SOME DEGREE OF ALERT FROM NOW UNTIL SOMETIME AFTER THE CHANGE OCCURS. ALL INDICATIONS ARE THAT THE SENIOR MILITARY LEADERSHIP WOULD PREFER THAT THE SITUATION REMAIN CALM SO THAT THEY DO NOT HAVE TO RISK VIOLENCE BY TAKING ACTION. WE HAVE A FEW INDICATORS THAT THE TOP MILITARY LEADERSHIP IS EXPLOITING THIS UNSTABLE PERIOD INTO AN OPPORTUNITY TO REASSERT SOME ADDITIONAL MILITARY INFLUENCE OVER THE GOVERNMENT. THE SENIOR GENERALS ALSO SEEM TO BE PLANNING TO USE THE CABINET RESHUFFLE TO KEEP THE LID ON SOME OF THEIR MORE ANXIOUS AND ZEALOUS UNDERLINGS WHO WOULD OTHERWISE BE PRESSING FOR MILITARY DOMINATION OF THE GOVERNMENT.

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 04 BANGKO 05234 301459Z

7. WE DO NOT YET HAVE ALL THE PIECES OF THE PUZZLE, BUT WILL REPORT FURTHER AS INFORMATION BECOMES AVAILABLE. AS THINGS NOW LOOK IT WOULD NOT SEEM THAT THE TYPE OF CHANGE PROBABLY ENVISAGED WOULD ADVERSELY AFFECT OUR INTERESTS.
KINTNER

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